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# Party policy position of Die Linke: A continuation of the PDS?

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## Abstract

In 2007, the German party Die Linke emerged as the result of the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism; the successor of the Communist Party) merging with the WASG (Wahlabernative Arbeit und Soziale Gerechtigkeit; a break away left wing of the Social Democrats). This article compares the policy position of Die Linke with the positions of the two merging partners. Using a recently developed computerized method, *Wordscores*, we investigate the differences between the merging partners and compare their policy positions with the position of Die Linke. We provide a systematic analysis of the parties' positions with respect to the economic policy issue based on the manifestos of the three parties. The word scores estimates reveal significant differences between the two merging partners and show that Die Linke is positioned closer to the PDS with respect to the economic issue.

## Keywords

Die Linke, merger, policy positions, Wordscores

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## Introduction

Recent German regional (*Bundesländer*) elections (in Lower Saxony, Hessen and Hamburg, among other places) have produced what many regard as a surprising result:

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the success of the new leftist party Die Linke. This party was the result of a merging of the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism; the successor to the Communist Party, SED [Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands]) and the WASG (Wahlalternative Arbeit und Soziale Gerechtigkeit – a break away movement of the Social Democratic Party, SPD). Despite its electoral success in both Western and Eastern Bundesländer, the party is facing several challenges. Joining forces with a political ‘opponent’ and partner involves the need to build a new party structure, write new statutes, develop a new party programme, and much more. This case study focuses on the ideological challenge Die Linke is facing after its merger. Die Linke has to develop a programmatic and ideological profile with which both merging partners (and their potential voters) can identify. In particular, the aim of the paper is to investigate the position of Die Linke with respect to its central policy issue (economy) and compare the party’s position with that of its merging partners. Using a new technique for the computerized analysis of political texts (Laver et al., 2003), we investigate the extent to which the ideology of Die Linke is a continuation of the ideas of the PDS or the result of a balanced compromise between the two merging partners.

This case study offers an interesting opportunity to examine the ‘ideological’ merging of parties, since Die Linke is the result of a merger of two very different parties with respect to their political culture and ideological history (Patton, 2006). The PDS was the successor of the communist SED and had a long history. The party’s profile and identity had always been strongly focused around old left topics such as employment, the economy and job security (Markovits and Silvia, 1997). In contrast, the WASG was launched as a protest movement in 2005. It opposed Schröder’s economic and labour market reforms and was a melting pot of, among others, unionists, disaffected SPD members as well as tiny communist groups and radical green leftists with a weak common ideology (Poguntke, 2005; Proksch and Slapin, 2006).

We present our study in four steps. In the next section we outline our case: the merger of WASG and PDS into Die Linke. We then introduce some ideas about the ideological challenge merging partners face and introduce our main hypothesis. Next, we present our methodology and data. Our empirical analysis is presented in the third section. We conclude with a brief summary and some suggestions for further research.

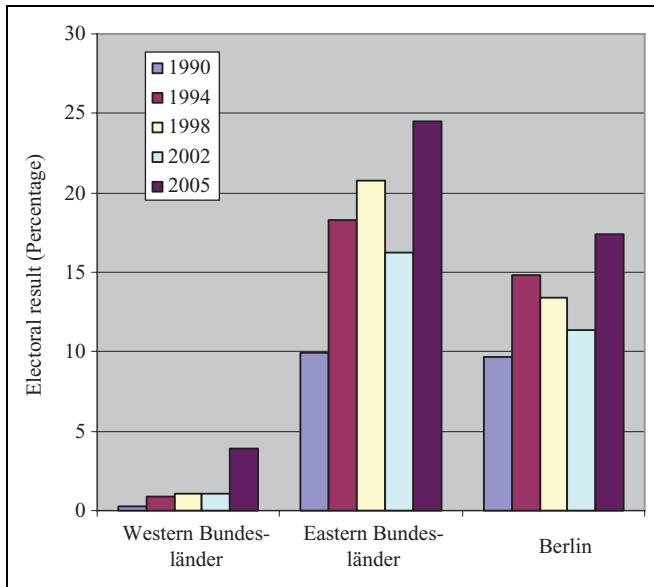
## Die Linke

When the electoral alliance DIE LINKSPARTEI.PDS – composed of the two leftist parties PDS and WASG – gained 8.7 percent of the vote in the pre-scheduled federal elections of 2005, it caught the political establishment quite by surprise. The immediate success of this left alliance at the polls was impressive, and was preceded and accompanied by criticism and protest from its respective members (Augstein, 2005; Scharenberg, 2006; Seils, 2007). Within the WASG, established in 2005, a question raised was whether the resourceful and politically more experienced PDS would not just structurally and programmatically subsume the much smaller WASG (Pohr, 2006). The PDS, in turn, was afraid that the WASG would gain too much influence in the programme debate, owing to its valuable voter potential in the Western Bundesländer and the value of its popular leader Oskar Lafontaine (Seils, 2007). Furthermore, the fear of ideological

vagueness was fuelled by the substantial differences with regard to the parties' programmatic contents (Micus, 2007: 194); some pragmatists of the PDS feared that 'greater ideological diversity would lead to a loss of *Politikfähigkeit*' (Hough et al., 2007: 141). A further complicating factor was the fact that the WASG was strategically oriented towards an oppositional role, whereas the dominant wing within the PDS strategically opted for political change through political cooperation (Scharenberg, 2006). Ideological differences, as well as a huge divide in their respective primary party goals, structural resources and electorate, were all brought into the negotiations for the merger. The significant divergences between the parties resulted in difficult negotiations when setting up the merger, which can be seen in the fact that the debate on the development of a programmatic and strategic profile is not yet finished, although certain trends in ideological and programmatic choices can be seen. In addition, each party had serene problems that made it important for both parties to broaden electoral gains if they were to become relevant actors in the German party system.

The PDS was the successor party of the authoritarian SED (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*) and therefore a small but established actor in the German party system (Hartleb and Rode, 2006: 12). It had a well-defined and continuous identity as the party of anti-capitalism moving – more recently – towards 'democratic socialism' (see PDS, 2003) and in its claim to be the sole deputy of genuine Eastern Bundesländer interests in the German political system. Because of its roots, the PDS had ample resources at its disposal. Among them were a very dense local and regional infrastructure – which it had inherited from the SED – and a large number of party members, particularly in the Eastern part of Germany.<sup>1</sup> The PDS also had some governmental and policy experience at the Bundesländer level and at the local level in the Eastern Bundesländer. It tolerated a minority government in Saxony–Anhalt from 1994 to 2002 and was part of a government coalition in Mecklenburg–West Pomerania (1998–2006) and Berlin (since 2001). Despite these regional successes, the PDS faced serious problems in the course of establishing itself as a relevant oppositional party at the national level, and was reduced to two seats in the 2002 national elections. It is obvious from Figure 1 that the PDS's electoral success was largely limited to the Eastern German Bundesländer. Indeed, the party had sufficient strength in the East to retain Bundestag representation, yet was never able to break through in the West. Also, where it was widely regarded as a legitimate expression of Eastern interests in the Eastern Bundesländer, it was always considered as a political outsider in Western Germany. The party's substantial electorate in Eastern Germany, but the lack of it in Western Germany, confined the party to the status of a 'regional pressure group' (Kitschelt, 2003: 135). The PDS was not able to expand its political infrastructure to the Western parts of Germany or enhance its membership in these parts (Moreau, 2002: 60). Besides, the party had a disproportionately high number of older members.<sup>2</sup>

The WASG, in turn, was established as an opposition movement to the reform programme Agenda 2010 of the SPD, which was intended to modernize the German welfare state by restricting entitlements, deregulating labour markets and restructuring pensions and healthcare. It represented itself as a modern left movement in defence of the welfare state and had among its members the charismatic Oskar Lafontaine, former SPD Finance Minister and national party chairman. In 2005, the first moves towards the foundation



**Figure 1.** Electoral results of the PDS (1990–2002) and DIE LINKSPARTEI.PDS (2005) in federal elections (percentages of valid votes – Zweitstimme) in Western and Eastern Germany

of a left-wing protest party were undertaken and in July the Alternative List for Employment and Social Justice (Wahlalternative Arbeit und Soziale Gerechtigkeit [WASG]) was launched (Poguntke, 2005). The WASG was a melting pot of people with very different backgrounds and was unable to build a coherent political identity. In fact, it did not strive for one because it perceived itself as a heterogeneous collective movement (see WASG, 2005), comprising disappointed former SPD members, unionists as well as left intellectuals (Nachtwey and Spier, 2007: 55). These different protagonists were united by the common political goal to achieve ‘social justice’ (see WASG, 2005). The rather loosely structured local and regional infrastructure of the WASG was mainly situated in the former Western parts of Germany, where it could count on support from within the trade union movement, which is traditionally allied to the Social Democrats (Poguntke, 2005). Hence, it had an important electoral basis.

It is clear that both the WASG and the PDS faced major (electoral) challenges at the national level, as the electoral basis of each party was located in only one part of Germany – the PDS in the Eastern Bundesländer, the WASG in the Western Bundesländer. Furthermore, the WASG lacked financial as well as infrastructural resources for national elections (Pohr, 2006). Finally, the PDS was afraid that it would render trifling at the national level after its debacle at the 2002 federal elections.

These structural problems became virulent when the then chancellor Schröder surprisingly called for pre-scheduled national elections in May 2005. Suddenly, two parties that were programmatically positioned left of the SPD competed for the national elections. In the same month, neither party had passed the 5 percent hurdle in the Bundesländer elections in North-Rhine Westphalia (WASG: 2.2 percent; PDS: 0.9 percent).

These disappointing results forced the WASG and PDS leaders to consider an electoral alliance for the upcoming elections. They also considered an alliance to be a 'historic chance' to establish a party left of the SPD (Scharenberg, 2006: 517). Shortly after Schröder's announcement, the party board members of both parties met and discussed the options of a left electoral alliance. Oskar Lafontaine and Gregor Gysi, two outstanding leading figures of, respectively, the WASG and PDS, declared that they would take up the leading position of this alliance (Micus, 2007: 191). The alliance formation was thus mainly an elite-driven process acted out by leading politicians of both parties and catalysed by the pre-scheduled elections (Lorenz, 2007; Micus, 2007). Its main goal was vote-seeking and the establishment of a relevant left party. To form the alliance, the PDS renamed itself DIE LINKSPARTEI.PDS in June 2005 and offered list places to WASG members who participated under the umbrella of DIE LINKSPARTEI. The common programmatic core was the call for 'social justice'.

The promising outcome of 8.7 percent of votes in the national elections of 2005 pointed the way ahead for the merger of the two parties into one united party. Albeit, the fusion was not undisputed; it was supported by a majority of both parties' members and each step of the merger was confirmed at respective party congresses. A steering commission was set up to prepare the infrastructural, financial and programmatic merger (Bartsch, 2007: 2). At the same time, different working groups responsible for infrastructure, finances and the ideological programme, respectively, were set up – all composed in a parity way – to work out the merger process. In December 2006 the chairs of both parties decided on the first common founding documents for the merger, among them the 'Founding Programme' (Gründungsprogramm), which was regarded by most political analysts as a first minimal compromise (Formelkompromiss) (Scharenberg, 2008). From March until May 2007, delegates of both parties voted and confirmed the merger in several steps, with 82.6 percent (PDS) and 83.9 percent (WASG) at respective ballots.

In sum, the final merging of both parties in 2007 could have been described as a 'rational marriage' driven mainly for electoral reasons, promoted by respective structural problems and catalysed by the pre-scheduled national elections in 2005. Only united as an electoral alliance first, later as one party, they hoped to overcome the 5 percent hurdle at the Bundesländer and at the national level.

## **Ideological challenges in merger integration**

Whereas the 'merger between two or more parties under a new political label is an exceptional event' (Bélanger and Godbout, 2004: 1; Mair, 1990), there is a continuing trend of merging between commercial firms. A fusion of two or more organizations is indeed a frequently used practice towards achieving growth in commercial environments. Yet, various surveys have indicated that most mergers fail because cultural clashes, confusion and internal disruptions, with dramatic declines in employee and customer satisfaction, all lead to significant declines in profitability (Epstein, 2004). There are indeed significant challenges in the integration of both technical and human aspects when two companies are brought together, i.e. often causing a power struggle as members of both companies seek control over the new organization (Epstein, 2004: 175).

Even though mergers allow organizations to attain goals they might not have been able to attain alone, they can be risky and definitely include different challenges for the composing partners. Merging partners have to decide on how to divide tasks between them and they need to build a new organizational structure, define common goals, set up new accounting procedures, and so on. In particular, the implementation of a new shared corporate culture, or for political parties a political identity, remains a complex and difficult process. Therefore, with respect to the merging of political parties, the development of a joint party programme is a particular issue since the programme is a main source of identification for members (Klingemann, 1989). This is also argued by Micus (2007), who points out that party manifestos are of fundamental importance for the self-perception of the party, and for the integration and linkage of party members to their party. Thus, Micus (2007) argues, party programmes mainly have an internal effect. Following this argumentation in a party merger, the creation of a united and cohesive party manifesto can be viewed as one of the major challenges. The reason lies in the above-mentioned importance of the party programme to internal integration and, as the former parties have a distinctive history, in the impossibility of starting the party anew from scratch. If the merger is not to be a takeover of members or absorption of the other party, the new programme must be designed in a way that does not repel the respective former members and voters, and should include the major ideological ideas of the different partners. This might result in a struggle for influence on major programmatic points, especially when the merger cannot, in management terms, be considered a 'merger of equals' (Rock et al., 1987: 360). This inequality was the case with the merging of the PDS and WASG, because the PDS had many more resources at its disposal.

With respect to the case of Die Linke, it seems therefore reasonable to assume that the PDS would shape the new programme more than would the WASG, as the PDS had more experience in the political system; at least in its outward presentation it was more (ideologically) coherent and had a more homogeneous membership, dominated by the reformist wing and therefore a fairly stable identity compared to the WASG. In our empirical analysis, the programme of Die Linke would then be much of a continuation of the PDS party programme. Thus, we assume that in a cluster plot of policy positions the programme of Die Linke will be positioned closer to the party programme of the PDS than to that of the WASG.

## Method

In order to answer our research question and to test the policy positions of the merging partners (WASG and PDS) and the newly formed party (Die Linke), we used the Wordscores technique developed by Laver et al. (2003). This estimates the unknown position of a set of virgin texts under investigation for one or more policy dimensions, stating these positions in relation to the known (or assumed) position of a particular set of reference texts.<sup>3</sup> The positions of reference texts are assigned by the researcher and are based on information such as expert surveys, party manifesto data or mass survey data.

Essentially, Wordscores treats words as 'data' based on the assumption that the relative frequencies of the use of specific words by political actors manifest underlying political positions. For a particular policy position, a numerical score is generated for each



word and a vector of word scores is calculated based on the relative frequencies of all words in the word universe of the reference texts. The vector of word scores for any *a priori* policy dimension is thus a function of the policy positions and the patterns of relative word frequencies in the set of reference texts. Using the derived matrix of word scores, it is then possible to study virgin texts with unknown policy positions. Basically, each word score in a virgin text gives a small amount of information about which of the reference texts the virgin text is most like, producing a conditional expectation of the virgin text's policy position. Each scored word in virgin texts adds to this information.

Once mean estimates of the policy positions of virgin texts have been calculated, the Wordscores program computes a standard error for each estimation. Through calculating a 95 percent confidence interval (mean raw score  $\pm 1.96$  standard errors), it is possible to judge whether a difference between estimated policy positions of two texts is significant (Laver et al., 2003: 317).

Finally, the Wordscores program provides a transformation of the so-called raw scores (calculated as presented above). While preserving the mean and relative positions of the virgin scores, their variance is set equal to that of the reference texts (Laver et al., 2003: 316), putting the scores of the virgin and reference texts on the same metric. This transformation enables comparison of the policy positions of the virgin and reference texts.

The validity and reliability of the Wordscores technique for estimating party policy positions has been shown in previous research (e.g. Klemmensen et al., 2007; Kritzinger et al., 2004; Laver et al., 2006), but has also been the subject of vivid scientific discussion (Benoit and Laver, 2007, 2008; Budge and Pennings, 2007a, 2007b; Martin and Vanberg, 2008). Budge and Pennings (2007a, 2007b) recognize the usefulness of the method, but are particularly concerned about the pairwise comparison (estimating policy positions on the basis of previous texts and findings); they argue that the program flattens out party movement, as previous computerized approaches have done. However, Klemmensen et al. (2007) demonstrate reasonably good performance when systematically comparing the Wordscores approach with expert data and the Comparative Manifesto Project. Martin and Vanberg (2008) criticized the transformation procedure for shortcomings which, as they argue, distort the metric on which scores are placed and is sensitive to the texts that are scored. They propose a more 'robust' transformation method that avoids both shortcomings and that is also recommended by Benoit and Laver (2008) when very few virgin texts are being used. Given that we only use three virgin texts in our analysis (see below), we decided to use the transformation method of Martin and Vanberg (2008) in our analysis presented below.<sup>4</sup> Yet, given that the main focus of our study is on comparing between the policy positions of the virgin texts we introduce (i.e. the programmes of the WASG, PDS and Die Linke), we rely mostly on the raw scores. These scores do not have the problems that occur when re-scaling raw Wordscores estimates and are informative in answering our research question.

## Analysis

The virgin texts of our analysis are the programmes of the merging partners (PDS and WASG) and the newly formed party Die Linke. For the PDS, we consider the

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics for manifestos

	Total words	Unique words	Words scored
Reference texts			
PDS 2002	14,074	4,138	
BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN 2002	14,322	3,670	
SPD 2002	20,922	4,886	
FDP 2002	26,765	6,499	
CDU/CSU 2002	20,245	5,195	
Virgin texts			
PDS 2003	18,281	4,648	16,105
WASG 2005	11,286	3,271	10,174
DIE LINKE 2007	8,942	2,773	8,015

programme that was published in September 2003. The text (Grundsatzprogramm) was written after the disappointing 2002 Bundestag elections and was considered the beginning of a new era in which the PDS no longer contested a social market economy.<sup>5</sup> Regarding the WASG, we examine their 2005 founding programme. For Die Linke, we considered their Eckpunkte programme, which was published in (Die Linke, 2007). This Key Points programme is a preliminary party programme reflecting a minimal first compromise between the two composing partners and is generally not considered as consolidated (Lang, 2008: 39). However, this Eckpunkte programme was the programme for the 2009 federal election campaign. Hence, the Eckpunkte programme may be considered as the way the party currently represents itself to both its members and the general electorate, and as such may reflect trends of programmatic choices and relations of power in that respect. As reference texts from which to calculate the scores of words in the virgin texts on the policy dimensions, we use the party manifestos of the 2002 elections of the main German parties (FDP, PDS, SPD, BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN and CDU/CSU).

The descriptive statistics for the manifestos presented in Table 1 illustrate that all reference texts are relatively long documents containing between 14,000 and 27,000 words and using between 3,500 and 6,500 unique words. Given that 'the content of the virgin texts is analyzed in the context of the word universe of the reference texts' (Laver et al., 2003: 315), the number of words of the reference texts is crucial when applying the Wordscores approach. The virgin texts are comparable in length to the reference texts and are between 9,000 and 18,300 words in length. The programme of the PDS is longer than the WASG programme, which mirrors the PDS's longer history as well as its experience in formulating policy and in governing (Hough et al., 2007: 142). The programme of Die Linke is the least detailed. As mentioned before, the aim of Die Linke's Eckpunkte programme was to reflect the minimum policy compromise between the WASG and the PDS, but also served as the 2009 election programme. The percentages of scoreable virgin words are 88.1 for the PDS 2003 manifesto (16,105/18,281), 90.1 for the WASG 2005 manifesto (10,174/11,286) and 89.6 for the Die Linke (2007) manifesto (8,015/8,942). In other words, a large majority of the words used in the virgin texts are also utilized in the reference texts.

**Table 2.** Estimated position on economic left-right dimension

	Expert assigned reference score (and SE)	Raw score		Transformed score
		Mean (and SE)	Confidence interval (95%)	
Reference texts				
PDS 2002	3.0 (0.19)	9.53 (0.02)	9.49–9.57	3.00
BÜNDNIS 90/ DIE GRÜNEN 2002	11.0 (0.35)	11.14 (0.01)	11.12–11.16	10.68
SPD 2002	9.3 (0.37)	11.01 (0.01)	10.99–11.03	10.06
FDP 2002	18.7 (0.14)	12.82 (0.02)	12.78–12.86	18.70
CDU/CSU 2002	14.4 (0.26)	11.90 (0.01)	11.88–11.92	14.31
Virgin texts				
PDS 2003		10.82 (0.02)	10.78–10.86	9.16
WASG 2005		11.14 (0.02)	11.10–11.18	10.68
DIE LINKE 2007		10.89 (0.03)	10.83–10.95	9.49

To establish the position of the reference texts, we used the results from the expert survey conducted by Benoit and Laver (2006). We considered the left–right dimension of economic policy, as this is a main issue in German politics in general and the parties under consideration (Benoit and Laver, 2006). This economic dimension is represented by the ‘tax versus spending increases’ distinction, varying between maximal redistribution and services (score 1) and maximal economic libertarianism (score 20).

The results of our analysis are presented in Table 2, which shows the expert assigned reference scores and the word scores estimates in both ‘raw’ form and ‘transformed’ form. The raw scores are particularly useful when drawing conclusions about the relative positions of the virgin texts and are thus of particular interest in relation to our research question. The transformed scores allow comparison of virgin text scores with the reference values (i.e. the 20-point expert scale).

The raw score results show that the policy positions on the economic dimension of the two merging partners (PDS and WASG) are different. Also the confidence intervals show that this difference is substantial and not the result of mere uncertainty in the estimate.<sup>6</sup> Hence, we can conclude that – before merging – the parties differed significantly from one another with respect to their economic position. The PDS was clearly more left-ist than the WASG. In other words, the WASG was more in favour of cutting public services in order to be able to cut taxes than was the PDS. This raises the question about which economic position the newly formed party, Die Linke, took. Did Die Linke position itself between the two merging partners, or was the party’s economic policy rather a continuation of one of the partner’s economic policy? The Wordscores estimates show a significant difference with respect to the economic policy between Die Linke and the WASG. The merged party is positioned to the left of the WASG. At the same time, the results reveal that the economic position of Die Linke is not significantly different from the PDS. Hence, in line with our expectations, Die Linke seems – at least with respect to the core tenet of the PDS’s policy agenda (i.e. the economic issue) – more a continuation of the PDS than a balanced compromise between two merging partners.

Before turning to the conclusion, it is interesting to compare the positions of the merging partners with those of the main German parties. Score transformation was applied to compare the position of reference texts with those of virgin texts. The transformed economic position of the WASG in 2005 is more rightist than the transformed score of the SPD 2002 party programme based on the Benoit and Laver (2006) expert survey. At first sight, this is unexpected, since the WASG movement split from the SPD because of its disagreement with the SPD's 'rightist' policy ideas and Schröder's Agenda 2010. The main focus of the discourse of the WASG was indeed its opposition to Schröder's economic and labour market reforms (Proksch and Slapin, 2006), and therefore the WASG was expected to be found to the left of the SPD. However, the 2002 SPD manifesto did not state anything about the labour market reforms introduced only a year later. In line with this argument is the finding that the WASG 2005 manifesto is more in favour of raising taxes to increase public services than the SPD 2005 manifesto (with a transformed score of 11.02; not presented in the table), being the result of a rightwards move of the SPD between 2002 and 2005. The transformed results also reveal a remarkable move rightwards of the PDS between 2002 and 2003, confirming the idea behind the PDS's programmatic shift towards the reformist/realist wing. Indeed, after its electoral defeat in 2002, the party introduced the social market economy in its 2003 programme and dissociated itself from the former SED and its communism. The party distanced itself from revolution and historical determinism, 'while acknowledging that entrepreneurial activity and the profit motive [were] important preconditions for innovation and economic productivity' (Patton, 2006: 217). The 2003 programme postulated a huge shift in the ideological/programmatic profile of the party as the reformist/realist wing asserted itself against the traditionalist/fundamentalist wing of the party (Gapper, 2003). The party learned from its defeat in 2002 that it had to intensify the expansion of its electoral base and modernize its programme to acquire a modern, left-socialist profile and to become a viable left-socialist alternative attractive to voters (Patton, 2006). The disastrous election results indeed showed the need to address questions of programmatic renewal, more pragmatic and flexible planning and government participation within the party; a reform that Zimmer – the chairwoman of the PDS between 2000 and 2003 – had hoped to do before the 2002 elections (Hough et al., 2007).

## Conclusions

Parties that emerge as a result of a merging process between two or more parties are faced with the challenge of developing a new ideological identity and programme with which the different merging partners, their members and voters, can identify. This search for a common programme between previously political 'opponents' is obviously more difficult the larger the ideological differences between the merging parties.

In this case study, we have considered the position of the party Die Linke, founded in 2007, and its merging partners, the WASG and PDS, with respect to the economic left–right policy issue. Using the Wordscores technique, our analysis reveals significant differences in the positions of the PDS and the WASG on the old economic cleavage. In line with our expectation, the content of the programme of their successor Die Linke is clearly closer to the PDS than to the WASG. Given the longer ideological history of the

PDS as well as its greater availability of resources, they seem to have had more influence on the ideological profile of the newly formed party than the 'little brother' WASG. The choice of Die Linke taking the position of the most leftist party clearly has implications for the composition of the German party system, and, in particular, means that the SPD will have a significant competitor on its left in future elections. Given the short history of Die Linke it remains to be seen whether the electoral success of the 2005 elections will persist in the future. For the first time in its history, the SPD has a potential durable partner on its left flank which it will have to deal with (see also Hough et al., 2007). The SPD will have to decide on the strategic dilemma – as have other European social democratic parties – whether to position itself as a traditional left-wing party or in the political centre. This choice will presumably be influenced by the finding that roughly a quarter of all voters who supported DIE LINKSPARTEI.PDS in 2005 voted SPD in 2002 (Hough, 2005).

Similarly, the policy stance of the SPD might influence the programmatic choices of Die Linke. This illustrates that although the Die Linke policy stance stems from the influence of its composing partners, it is also the result of influences outside the merged party, such as policy positions of competing political parties and social and cultural change. Indeed, a party does not act in a vacuum; its position is influenced by different social and political changes and interactions. Even though a quantitative method of text analysis, such as Wordscores, cannot capture these influences, we believe that this note offers an interesting contribution to the empirical work on party programmes and illustrates the usefulness of the novel technique of Wordscores. In applying this technique, we hope to have contributed to its improvement, thereby increasing its scientific validity. Besides, this study contributes to the study of political parties and party change. Even though scholars in the field of party organization have recently been focusing on the phenomena of party adaptation and party change, party mergers – that can be considered as an extreme case of a party change – are under-studied at best (Mair, 1990). We believe we have filled some of this gap by investigating one case of a party merger. Although this offered the possibility to investigate and understand the dynamics present within a single setting, a next interesting step would be a comprehensive study investigating and comparing the ideological positioning of different merged parties and their respective preceding political parties. A more comprehensive study could open the way for further testing of our hypothesis, and might help us develop more ideas surrounding our hypothesis on party mergers. Besides, future research might test where Die Linke will go and how it will manage the heterogeneous demands put forward within the party. Our study has shown where different fractions and tensions may occur. Indeed, the differing positions of the WASG and the PDS may articulate programmatic distinctions within Die Linke and lead to bitter disputes if the party further elaborates its policy stance and manifesto in the future.

## Notes

1. In 2005, the PDS had 60,338 members in the Eastern länder and 7,257 in the Western länder (see [www.die-linke.de](http://www.die-linke.de)).
2. In 2005, over 80 percent of PDS members were older than 50 years of age; 64 percent of them were older than 65 years.

3. A detailed description of the Wordscores technique is provided in Laver et al. (2003). See also <http://wordscores.com> for the Wordscores software. Our description of the method relies heavily on Benoit et al. (2005: 299–300), Laver et al. (2006: 679–80) and Laver et al. (2003: 313).
4. The transformed score for text  $t$  was calculated using the following formula:

$$\hat{P}_t = \left\{ (P_t - P_{\min}), \frac{A_{\max} - A_{\min}}{P_{\max} - P_{\min}} \right\} + A_{\min}$$

in which  $P$  refers to the raw score and  $A$  to the exogenous reference score,  $A_{\min}$  and  $A_{\max}$  being the smallest and largest exogenous reference scores. Note that this transformation – as any transformation – does not reproduce the exogenous scores of all reference texts (Martin and Vanberg, 2008: 99).

5. Note that the manifesto was also used as the election programme for the 2005 Bundestag snap elections. The party participated at these elections under the name DIE LINKSPARTEI.PDS and some WASG people were put on the election lists.
6. We did an additional significance test for our three main programmes by calculating a straightforward z-score of the difference between the raw score means of two texts using the following formula:

$$z = \frac{|P_x - P_y|}{\sqrt{SE_x^2 + SE_y^2}}$$

in which  $P_x$  and  $P_y$  refer to the raw score means of the economic position of texts  $x$  and  $y$ , respectively, and  $SE_x$  and  $SE_y$  to the standard error of the raw score means of the economic position of texts  $x$  and  $y$ , respectively. When this z-score is  $>1.96$ , it means that the difference between the two means is significant (at the 95 percent confidence interval). This calculation of a z-score is a more informative test for the significance of differences in mean scores than looking at the 95 percent confidence intervals as presented earlier and as done in previous Wordscores analyses (e.g. Benoit and Laver, 2003; Laver et al., 2006). The conclusions based on this additional test were similar to those based on the interval levels of confidence as presented in Table 2.

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